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Attn: Patrick F. Brinson, Examiner

Reference: Application No. 10/660,018 Applicant: Schroeder, Frank Stephen Art Unit: 3754

Subject: Claim rejections – 35 USC / 102

The Ransom patent PCT WO 01/94820 describes an auxiliary venting devise inserted between two lengths of pipe. Schroeder's system describes a means of actually flanging the ends of the pipe.

Ransom (page 6) "...a length of rigid pipeline 20 having a conventional flange connection 22 at either end".

Schroeder "...a pipe having a pair of ends."

Ransom's pipe already has a flanged connection on the pipe and per his Fig. 1 drawing the flange connections are actually Weld Neck flanges. Schroeder has a pipe with a plain end and the Schroeder devise actually creates the flange on the pipe.

Ransom (page 6): "Each of the connector devices 24 comprises a length of conduit 28 having a flange connection 30 at each end..."

Schroeder: "a rotating back up flange is placed over an end of said pipe; a socket stub end placed on the said end of said pipe and affixed to said pipe;"

Ransom's 28 is not a socket stub end but a length of conduit. Ransom's 30 is not a rotating back up flange but a fixed slip-on flange. Ransom has no stub ends in his device. Ransom has no back up flanges. All of Ransom's flanges are fixed and non-rotating. The rotating back up flange and socket stub end are crucial to the Schroeder flanging system. Ransom's device is placed beyond the flanged end of the original pipe (20, 22). Schroeder's system connects directly onto the end of the original pipe and forms the original flanged end.

Ransom (page 10): "In use of the invention for the purpose of installing a liner in a subsea pipeline, one of the devises 24 is fitted to each end of the length of pipeline which is to be lined. The U-shaped liner is pulled through the pipeline from one end thereof, trimmed to length and its ends secured and sealed to the outer ends of the devices 24 by any suitable means (as known in the art)."

Schroeder: "a liner, received within said pipe, having a liner flare extending radially outward and positioned in overlapping relation with said socket stub end face forming a gasket."

Ransom's liner must be pulled through the original pipe and also through the auxiliary venting devise attached to the original pipe. Schroeder's system is the actual flange on the original pipe and not an auxiliary devise placed beyond the original pipe for the purpose of venting.

Schroeder's pipe already has a liner in place before attaching the socket stub end and rotating back up flange and is not a means of retrofitting an existing piping system.

Ransom (page 6): "The fluid outlet passage 40 communicates with the annular volume defined by the groove 36 and, via the apertures 32, with the interior of the conduit 34."

Schroeder: "said socket stub end having at least one predetermined vent hole having an inlet opening located behind said socket and an outlet opening located behind said stub end."

Ransom's venting outlet lies in the center of the conduit of his devise. Schroeder's venting outlet lies in the socket stub end at the flange. Ransom does not have vent openings in the ends of his pipe. Schroeder's venting is performed at the flange connection of the original pipe.

Venting lined pipe is a well known procedure discussed in Davies, Press and Walko. All other venting systems are installed in the factory at the time the original pipe was manufactured. Schroeder's system is for fabricating a pre-lined pipe in the field (called a field flare system in the industry) and allowing the pipe length to have a venting outlet when none can be made available due to the fact that the liner is already in the pipe at the time the ends are fabricated with flanges.

Ransom's system has no relationship to the Schroeder claim. Ransom is about venting the pipe prior to inserting the plastic lining. Schroeder is about venting the flange connection of a lined pipe. All previous claims: ie Davies, Press, Walko were about venting the pipe. Only Schroeder addresses venting the pipe through a rotating flange stub end connection. No other claimant has ever proposed a rotating flange stub end system for fabricating a plastic lined pipe, let alone providing for a venting system in such a connection.